

Strategy Research Project

PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS IN REGIONAL- COMMAND-EAST (OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM-VIII)

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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(OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM-VIII)**

by

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ABSTRACT

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Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan, specifically in Regional-Command-East during OEF-VIII, provide an insight into how the Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic elements of national power can be brought together to create the desired effects in a Counter-Insurgency (COIN) effort. The author was part of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82d Airborne Division's deployment to Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom VIII; serving as the Deputy Commander for the Brigade Combat Team, and specifically as the officer charged with over watch of the unit's four U.S., one Czech, and one Turkish PRT, as well as close work with the attached Polish Battle Group. U.S. PRTs in RC-E enjoyed a significant measure of support from the U.S. in all aspects: from training, fielding, and funding, to partnership with maneuver units in the field; all to create the desired effects in the counter-insurgency fight.

PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS IN REGIONAL-COMMAND-EAST (OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM VIII)

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Regional Command-East (RC-E) during Operation Enduring Freedom VIII provide insight into how the Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic aspects of National Power can be focused together for unity of effort in a counter-insurgency (COIN) fight. The author served as the Deputy Commander of the 4th Brigade Combat Team (BCT) of the 82d Airborne Division during its deployment to Operation Enduring Freedom VIII in Regional Command-East, Afghanistan. One of my duties as the Deputy Commander (DCO) was to serve as the Brigade Commander's primary command representative in over watch of our four U.S., and eventually one Turkish and one Czech PRT in our unit's portion of Regional Command East (RC-E) in Eastern Afghanistan. The 4th BCT, 82d ABN Division, was responsible for over 23,000 square miles of battle space, encompassing the provinces of Paktya, Paktika, Khowst, Ghazni, Logar, and Wardak, over a period of fifteen months, until relieved by the 4th BCT, 101st ABN/ASSLT division. Our Division headquarters was also responsible for the additional U.S. PRTs in country, under the tactical guidance of the 173rd Airborne Brigade in the northern portion of RC-E. In total, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was responsible for 26 PRTs throughout Afghanistan.¹

The sources for this research paper included the six filled ledgers the author recorded during our training, deployment, and redeployment, briefings conducted during the deployment, contacts with United States Agency for International Development, contacts with elements of the deployed Department of State representatives, and

elements within the deployed 4th BCT-101st Airborne division. Sources and back-ground from here at the USAWC include members from the Peace-Keeping and Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI), class readings during the previous six months, as well as periodicals, books, and After Action Reviews from both military and civilian subject-matter experts in the areas of counter-insurgency and its “best practices.” The evolution of what the role of the Department of Defense should be in “nation building” provided some back-ground. The military personnel in our combat team knew that the military was not necessarily the “best” element in terms of the required skill sets for nation-building, but had the capacity to support the team effort. We were constantly reminded that “Afghanistan is not Iraq”, and that our mission would be more of “construction”, than “reconstruction.”²

The 4th BCT, 82d ABN gained an advantage in preparation for its war-time mission by conducting a series of pre-deployment site surveys to the 3rd BCT, 10th Mountain Division which was under the command of COL Mick Nicholson. Nicholson was fighting the COIN effort in RC-E with a single combat BCT and its associated PRTs. We included our future PRT commanders (undergoing training at Fort Bragg, NC) in our pre-deployment training in order to aid in development of the trust and confidence necessary to fight and win over a significant amount of battle space. Each of our battalion and PRT commanders would operate in separate provinces that could be hours away from the brigade headquarters by air, and possibly days by ground. Given this distance and the limitations of radio instructions it was considered important to have our primary leadership know each other personally. Our Brigade commander crafted a series of training events to bring the commanders and staff together with the goal of

increasing our efficiency and understanding of each other as preparation for the distances we would face in the future. I was sent along with our unit command-sergeants majors to visit the DCO of the 3/10th and gain an appreciation of the challenges faced by the PRT commanders then serving in theater. Visits to PRT Mether-Lam, PRT Ghazni, and PRT Khowst were conducted, as well as attending both the PRT conference in Kabul and a Campaign Objectives Assessment Brief (COAB) in Bagram, along with detailed pre-briefs by the current TF Spartan (3/10 BCT, 10th Mountain Division), USAID representative, BCT Civil Military Officer, and Department of State representative or Political Affairs Advisor. I unfortunately was able to see the impact of the assassination of one of the provincial governors on the PRT effort in the area, and perhaps more importantly, how the current unit addressed the threat. The unit was able to rapidly obligate funds to provide each of the Afghan Provincial Governors in RC-East with two armored civilian sports utility vehicles that would enable the Governor to conduct his business in a non-US military vehicle, but with the appropriate force protection requirements needed for perceived post-assassination threats.³ This reconnaissance saved a significant amount of time in understanding the basics of the incredibly complex battlefield in RC-E. Our unit was immediately struck by the critical importance of the PRTs in providing the Afghan people the ability to choose whether to support their own government, or the Taliban/Al-Qaeda insurgents. Our “non-lethal” bullets were the immense deep funding pockets of our USAID partners, and the rapid, “non-lethal dollars” provided by the Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP).⁴ Another area that quickly gained our attention was the criticality of time in the counter-insurgency fight. It took time to build the personal relationships and trust

required with our Afghan hosts both on the civilian and military side, this “three cups of tea” time became something that both our maneuver and PRT commanders quickly learned was a key to success.⁵

During our Brigade rotation in theater, we went through three changes of U.S. PRT leadership. In each cycle, three U.S. Navy Commanders and one U.S. Air Force Lieutenant-Colonel led a joint, combined, and inter-agency team of approximately 82 personnel each. The 3/10th BCT moved to Jalalabad for three months in an extended tour as US forces doubled in RC-East and eventually was replaced by the 173rd Airborne Brigade from Vicenza Italy. Our BCT environment in RC-E was much less than permissive; despite the PRT focus on creating capacity within Afghanistan for the betterment of the citizens, hostility and open combat were daily events that challenged the entire BCT/PRT team. Casualties occurred in the combined team during the deployment, but never undermined the quality of the PRT effort.⁶

Approximately six months into our rotation we gained “handcon”⁷ of the Turkish PRT in Wardak province. This was our single PRT that was not directly partnered with a maneuver element. Our Brigade Special Troops Battalion (BSTB) and 2/508th Parachute Infantry Regiment provided the Turkish PRT with regular liaison and served as an additional element able to respond to security threats if required. Approximately eleven months into our rotation our BCT aided the introduction and partnership with the Czech PRT newly arriving in country by both the exchange of information over the phone and by sending subject-matter experts to participate in the Czech pre-deployment planning and training. Our BSTB engineers and contracting personnel built the complete base for the PRT and established the critical maneuver battalion

partnership. By the time our rotation ended, the Czech PRT was fully capable in country, albeit with a structure very different from a U.S. PRT. The Czech PRT had over 200 personnel, its own wheeled as well as tracked Infantry Fighting Vehicles, its own intelligence support, as well as a robust national civilian element.⁸

During our deployment; the PRTs and attached maneuver battalions of the 4th BCT obligated over \$156 million in aid projects. Additionally, projects to promote good governance, rule of law, agricultural improvements, and literacy further increased the ability of the Afghan government to both connect with and provide needed services to their citizens.

Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan and Iraq differ, depending on the country providing them and on the environment in which they operate.

In “non-U.S.” -led regions of Afghanistan, PRTs often reported directly to the ISAF headquarters. In our “U.S.” RC-E, the PRTs reported to the US Brigade Commander who was the “battle space owner”, or the military officer who was responsible for the command and control of all military forces in the area. In military operations this ensures that the commander understands where the friendly and enemy forces are located and how to ensure that the assets needed to accomplish the assigned mission are applied effectively. The PRTs were considered another element on the field that were key to the COIN fight for the Brigade and larger mission .⁹ Regional Command-East encompassed significantly restive provinces, the majority of which directly touch the tribal mountainous areas of the Pakistan-Afghan border. Our PRTs could not operate freely without an adequate security bubble, either provided organically or by partnered-maneuver battalion. Governors in RC-E were often targets

for assassination; at least five bombing attempts were made against Governor Jamal of Khowst during our tenure together. In contrast, the German PRT to our North was much larger in size, operated in truly permissive areas, and were much heavier in terms of civilian expertise.

Each rotation of both PRT and maneuver brigade should improve in its ability to serve the people of Afghanistan in terms of effectiveness of the “non-kinetic” aspects of the counter-insurgency fight. Unfortunately the effectiveness of the individual unit appears to improve only after months on the ground despite efforts to conduct comprehensive training and an exchange of information between units. Although critics have often described the U.S. effort as a series of one-year engagements vs. an eight-year fight; continuity and lessons-learned continue to improve. I personally believe that now that the OEF and OIF effort has continued for years, our military and civilian professionals are truly treating this as a marathon effort instead of a military “sprint.” OEF early rotations (to include ones that many of our unit officer’s and non-commissioned officers participated in) fought only the barest of non-kinetic portions of the COIN due to the lack of PRTs and the economy of force in terms of funding and manpower for this huge country. Our war-college class has studied counter-insurgency history during this academic year. We have learned that focusing only on the kinetic approach has never proven completely successful. ADM. Eric Olson stated, “The indirect approach requires more time than the direct approach to achieve effects, but ultimately will be the decisive effort.”¹⁰

Leadership within the U.S. PRTs varied immensely between our three rotations; fortunately the quality of the senior officers assigned to the posts quickly addressed the

challenges posed by the mission, enemy, and terrain. The Navy, in particular, sent its best officers to support the COIN fight; both CDR John “Duke” Wade and CDR Dave Adams worked directly for the Chief of Naval Operations when they were detailed personally to lead PRTs.¹¹ We had nuclear submarine commanders, Navy Blue Angel pilots, decorated FA/18 pilots; an incredibly talented group of joint officers leading a rainbow coalition of active and reserve component Soldiers, sailors, airmen; and an interagency team that included Department of State and USAID personnel; as well as occasional US Department of Agriculture and other personnel.¹² These dedicated officers also worked closely with their linked Army maneuver battalion commanders, and often other government agency personnel on complex, multi faceted missions. This mission was compounded in complexity by the criticality of developing a close relationship with the provincial governor and his staff, the local Afghan National Army and National Police leadership as well as myriad non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Each small PRT worked complicated engineering projects costing millions of dollars, and all were subject to both U.S. and coalition Quality Assurance/Quality Control—with considerable U.S. fiscal oversight. This all provided a credible challenge to a talented group. We at the Brigade (and specifically at the PRT) were challenged to ensure that the appropriate funds were used for each project or part thereof. Title 10 and Title 22 funding had separate requirements while CERP and USAID had specific limitations. In an example, to build a district center, or medical clinic one had to ensure the appropriate funds were used to build the physical structure of the building and install plumbing, and electrical systems as applicable; but also that any required observation towers or walls were included in the end product. I soon realized that nothing gets built

successfully in Afghanistan if it does not have a wall to shield it from prying eyes, and towers to enable its occupants to defend themselves from thieves, rival tribes, or the Taliban.¹³

The PRT itself provides an example of how a military/governmental organization can serve as a tactical enabler of the Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic (DIME) elements of National power. In the following sections I will briefly provide examples of how this enabling function worked in RC-E during OEF VIII.

Diplomatic. Each PRT had a Department of State (DOS) representative who was to work in collaboration/unity of effort with the PRT and USAID representative. I state “unity of effort” since the PRT commander did not enjoy true “command” over either USAID or Department of State representatives. “HandCon”¹⁴ was developed and matured as all three legs of the triad built trust and confidence in the abilities and capacity of each other. Our DOS representatives varied in age and experience; but all worked diligently to build Afghan capacity. The expertise provided by the DOS representative helped the commander’s understand the intricacies of the Afghan central government and the processes required for our provincial governors to work within the Afghan system. Our DOS personnel additionally provided a window into what the current U.S. national and international diplomatic efforts were impacting on Afghanistan.

The diplomatic challenges for each PRT varied also due to the quality of the provincial governor of each particular area. The relationship of the provincial governor to senior Afghan governmental officials and President Karzai was critical. Tribal power issues helped shape both the timing and appointment of provincial governors as well as their effectiveness. A truly effective governor had to be able to work the complex

dynamics of the Afghan government in Kabul as well as the intricacies of politics in a province where he personally may be considered a semi-foreigner. In one of our provinces, the young provincial governor was incredibly effective at building consensus among his various, older tribal leaders due to his continued demonstration of honesty and ability to provide goods and services to his constituents.¹⁵ In another province, the Governor was switched out four times by President Karzai during our rotation. This particular provinces' governors included a personally brave but completely ineffective former Mujahedeen fighter, a dual citizen, "Tony Soprano" type of extremely dubious honesty; and a "no kidding" bad guy who had very close personal links to various insurgent groups that had caused casualties among the coalition. No matter what "kind" of provincial governor served, his PRT commander was to partner with him for the greatest positive effects.

The diplomatic effort that included our Afghan governors, maneuver battalion commanders, and PRT commanders was not without danger. During a border meeting in Pakistan our BCT and Afghan team was ambushed immediately following the formal proceedings. We lost a superb field grade officer and came close to losing the rest of the team. Our Afghan governor was relatively non-plussed, but the event and its impact had a deep effect on the rest of our inter-agency team. For our Brigade political advisor it was his first close contact with the personal risk involved in field diplomacy.¹⁶ On both the diplomatic and information side, the PRTs constantly hosted visits from international visitors, from the United Nations Military Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) to the International Red Cross, foreign diplomatic missions, Afghan dignitaries, ISAF Ambassadors, NATO country ambassadors, as well as Congressional delegations.

Each PRT commander and his partnered maneuver Battalion commander and Afghan Provincial Governor were consistently called upon to demonstrate and brief the challenges and victories they encountered. The diplomatic effort supported international donation of both funds and manning to the Afghanistan mission and was a key contributor to the positive information campaign in support of Afghan government. At the higher levels; our 82d Airborne Division staff, specifically the Assistant Division Commander for Support, hosted multi-agency conferences at Bagram that brought together the military, DOS, USAID, NGOs, and Afghan leadership into a safe working environment. Additionally, ISAF hosted regular “PRT Conferences” in Kabul for the same purpose. Personalities matter, and I believe that each of these conferences broke down any real or perceived barriers to communication for all concerned.

Informational. Each PRT worked to ensure that the “Afghan Story” was brought out as accurately and quickly as possible for the benefit of the Afghan people and the counter-insurgency effort. Our own commander’s intent stipulated that we were supporting the Islamic Government of Afghanistan (IROA) effort on behalf of their people---this was NOT a unilateral U.S. effort to help the people of Afghanistan. The PRT and coalition staffs supported coverage of the improvements in all aspects of the improvements in the capacity of the Afghan government, helped build an Afghan media capability, and aided in the movement of Afghan governmental officials out to their constituents. In the past; if an Afghan needed something from the government, he went to Kabul. The PRTs helped “bring government to the people”; or the governor out to the farthest portions of his province whether by vehicle convoy or by coalition aircraft. Both the PRTs and the maneuver brigade were constantly challenged by the rapidity of the

insurgent information operations effort. The age of cell phone cameras and Internet access enabled an incredibly rapid “flash to bang” of the insurgent story to an international audience.

The PRT worked to help provide the Afghan government story to both an internal and external audience. Each PRT had a small number of contractor provided interpreters of various degrees of quality and language proficiency. Each PRT additionally had locally contracted interpreters, or “terps” of various levels of capability and vetting. Towards the mid-point of our rotation, guidance was provided that dictated that only a certain company could provide “interpreters” to the coalition effort. This rapidly threatened to unemploy the best and most effective local “terps,” many who had passed polygraph checks and who had worked for the coalition for years. We were able, however to keep select locals in a billet as “Afghan Cultural Advisors” or ACAs. ACAs provided another window to the Afghan culture as well as aiding in the effort to address true local needs, versus what Americans and coalition troops “perceived” the needs to be. The addition of Human Terrain Teams (HTTs) to our BCT gave us professional cultural anthropologists who could and did work closely with the PRTs to provide another “cultural lens” into our various tribal entities which greatly improved the efficacy of our combined/joint effort.¹⁷ These HTTs had to perform their work in the challenging security environment of Afghanistan while partnered with US forces, but also were often challenged in the press by fellow scholars. The HTT program itself was attacked by elements within the academic community despite the initial success of the field teams. “Mercenary Anthropologists” was a title that appeared in the press during our rotation to Afghanistan, earning a series of supporting letters from our staff in defense of the HTT

efforts.¹⁸ The informational effort was also greatly assisted by the growth and capacity of the Brigade Fires and Effects Cell (FECC). A field artillery-branch field grade officer led a distinct staff cell encompassing both our lethal and non-lethal effects, much of our PRT liaison in our civil-military operations cell, our Public Affairs Officer, and our Human Terrain Teams, which greatly improved the quality and timeliness of support to the PRTs. With very little notice, a BCT PAO team could be on an aircraft, with Afghan media personnel embedded, in support of a PRT/provincial Afghan government event. As stated in the Diplomatic section- the visits to our PRTs were fully supported in order to make the disruption of the PRT normal mission something of value to both the PRT and to the overall fight. The PRT had so much “good news” to show in terms of Afghan development that it was a key factor in our successful information campaign.

Military. Although the PRT was a major tool in creating positive effects for the Afghan people, it was and remains a powerful tool for the counter insurgency fight. We did not “clear and hold” with a maneuver unit, and then later “build” with the PRT. All three tasks were done as close to simultaneously as possible in an effort that greatly improved over time. The partnership between the PRT and its maneuver battalion proved critical. Both elements needed what the other could provide versus past experiences with the PRTs conducting kinetic operations poorly and maneuver battalions conducting traditional “Civil Military Operations” with much less than optimum effects. A series of operations developed that improved over our fifteen month deployment to the point that it became a regular event for an Afghan 203rd Corps led operation, with an embedded 4th Brigade tactical assault command post, to employ Afghan National Army and Police elements with U.S. maneuver and PRT units, to work

simultaneously throughout a province on a named operation. The U.S. PRT had access to the talent and CERP dollars to support Afghan envisaged projects; U.S. and Afghan maneuver elements provided the needed security to both the Afghan citizenry and the desired projects; the Afghan people saw their own governmental leaders and security personnel bringing positive effects to their villages. MG Khalique, Commander of the Afghan National Army 203rd Corps, was keenly aware of the strength of truly combined operations under Afghan leadership with both U.S. and ANA forces. “Whenever we show up, we win,” was a quote from our first combined operation.¹⁹ The Taliban/AI-Queda could not provide any competition to this combined effort other than terror and death.²⁰ The single best example of this PRT/maneuver battalion partnership was in the province of Khowst. Two PRT commanders in turn partnered in a phenomenally effective manner with the maneuver battalion commander to support what was likely the best governor in RC-E. Over fifteen months, this province, once the “suicide bomber capital” of Afghanistan, became one of the most secure and prosperous provinces in the entire country. Once the Afghan citizen could safely choose to back the government, he did so.

The efforts of the Special Forces (“White SOF”) in our area of operations were critical. These quiet professionals consistently demonstrated the ability and dedication to aid the Afghan effort both kinetically and non kinetically. When our operations were coordinated and complementary with theirs, the SOF Soldiers helped produce powerful combined effects.

Our Brigade Combat Team owned the battle space in which the battalions, the PRTs, and even the Special Forces teams operated, and our proficiency in working all

elements together grew over the course of the rotation.²¹ By combining our efforts, the PRTs were able to act as a rapid conduit to the provincial governor during operations involving “non BCT” forces operating in our battle-space. When special operations forces conducted raids on high value targets, the PRT commander would call his provincial governor immediately upon execution of the mission, explaining what had occurred and more importantly the reason why. This sounds simple, but it was not as carefully synchronized during earlier OEF rotations. We found that when a Governor was brought to the village where such a raid was conducted, he was often able to provide the background to the villagers and the evidence for why such action had been taken with his approval²². The PRTs additionally benefitted by an improvement in the command and control arrangement with the Mobile Training Team (MTT) personnel operating throughout Afghanistan under Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A). When our unit first arrived in Afghanistan there was almost no coordination in any manner in where and when these MTTs operated. After several incidents it was decided that when MTT elements operated within the 4th BCT battle space, such elements were OPCON to our Brigade. This simple change enabled our PRTs to understand and combine all of the positive aspects of the “military” element of power within their respective provinces.²³ I was one of the people who was truly heartened by our governmental decision to send more Soldiers to our economy of force effort in Afghanistan. Wherever we can help our allied Afghans to improve and partner on security, the people flock to the positive effects of their government.

The military element of national power was also critical in ensuring the growth of Afghan institutions of security, the Afghan National Army (ANA), its less well developed

Afghan National Police (ANP), and the extremely challenged Afghan Border Police (ABP). PRTs in RC-East had a small contingent of DynCorp's contractors who were to help develop the police in terms of small arms proficiency and the basics of accounting for police officers' equipment and pay. This mission rapidly returned to the responsibility of CSTC-A's efforts to expand the security capacity of the Afghans as the criticality of the ANP became apparent to coalition leadership. The ANA had improved dramatically as a stable element of the Afghan government, and it was determined that the ANP required the same commitment in order to accelerate its growth. Coalition advisors and Afghan government officials indicated that the ANA should be utilized to perform classic military missions of fighting the nation's enemy and to secure the border while the ANP would focus on internal security and law enforcement. A mission that was much too large for a PRT proved too large for CSTC-A as well, resulting in maneuver elements from the 82d Airborne Division and its attachments assisting in the training and mentorship of all aspects of the Afghan security forces. PRTs, CSTC-A, and our own unit worked cooperatively in a relationship that matured to the benefit of the Afghan Security Forces (ASF).²⁴ Both the PRTs and our maneuver units initially sought to support the strategy of disbanding tribal militias and supporting professional ANA, ANP, and ABP formations with varying degrees of success on the ANP side. Many young men wanted to stay near their villages in order to be able to bring their pay home and improve their immediate family's quality of life- a difficult prospect in a budding professional Army spread across Afghanistan.²⁵ During our fifteen months in Afghanistan we saw incredible improvement in the professionalism of the Afghan National Army. The local Afghans consistently appeared pleased with the actions of the

ANA and their presence in the field. After the initial month in theater our commander impressed on the team the criticality of matching up U.S. and ANA with their ANP counterparts in a partnered effort to improve the police capability and capacity to perform to an acceptable standard. Traffic control points would often be manned with ANA and ANP as well as coalition Soldiers to improve the police capacity.²⁶ During my initial pre-deployment site survey, I was able to see the friction between the people of a village in Ghazni province, the ANA, and the ANP resulting in guns being drawn between the ANA and ANP over accusations of theft by the police. Significant progress was made, but this will continue to take a multi-year effort to achieve.

Another project that was “led” by the Military component of both our BCT and PRTs consisted of efforts to improve the Rule of Law (ROL) in our portion of RC-E. During our pre-deployment site surveys and training, the topic of Rule of Law had been raised, but was discussed as something that Department of State representatives in Kabul, along with Italian elements were working on. In our portion of RC-E, there was almost zero visible progress in this area. Our PRTs discussed RoL with their respective governors, each of whom had their own views on the topic. The Italians had barely touched the surface on the topic, and only in Kabul. In the provinces we saw mixed examples of tribal law, mainly influenced by the traditional Pashtunwali codes of behavior in the Pashtun areas, and/or Sharia (Islamic) law in others. There was no visible education for local lawmakers, and no agreed upon norms of behavior in addressing criminal activity, or in terms of enemy or terrorist personnel. The ANP could arrest people, but there was no true RoL to have crimes investigated, prosecuted, and a judgment pronounced. Our PRTs conducted research into RoL in their respective

provinces, and our unit lawyer put together a program in coordination with our Divisional JAG as well as USAID to conduct training in the RoL. At both BCT and the PRTs, a training program was put together and executed in both Gardez and Khowst provinces. Funding, including from USAID, enabled gatherings of provincial and district lawyers to be quartered, fed, and educated; at the end of which each lawmaker was given a complete set of legal texts in the local language. We were also able to select and fund an Afghan lawyer who served in our Brigade legal office, greatly improving our ability to support RoL training and capacity building.²⁷

Economic. Despite pledges of millions of dollars in international aid to Afghanistan there is not significant government capacity to bring goods and services to the people outside of Kabul. This is not necessarily an indictment of the Afghan government; 35-plus years of war removed much of the intellectual, economic, and structural capital of the country, while empowering local actors. There were few if any structures left in country to be able to spend money in an effective manner that would be felt by the people. Often Afghans would tell us that they had seen and heard promises of millions and millions of dollars to Afghanistan, but that such promises were either lies, or the money was stolen in Kabul. Historically, the only thing that came from the capital city was the occasional tax collector (or worse). I heard this from both Afghans in the field, as well as from international experts at conferences and meetings I attended in country. As late as March of 2008 as part of the information campaign in support of continuing western aid to Afghanistan, Ali Ahmad Jalali wrote of “How to win in Afghanistan” in a clear and compelling manner.²⁸ His effort in the article supported the

myriad other recommendations to the new U.S. administration to continue the support to Afghanistan and its people.

The combined/joint/inter-agency power of the PRT was the ability to actually leverage funds to the betterment of the Afghan people, not just provide promises that may or may not be fulfilled. Our commander called CERP dollars “non lethal bullets” in our COIN strategy, and it worked. Military and civilian expertise for finance, engineering, and so forth was resident on site for project development in close cooperation with the local Afghan government.

Our PRT military members could readily access the CERP funds, and actually deliver projects and funding on time to the people. Resident PRT expertise in how to craft contracts rapidly and to conduct quality assurance/quality control brought immediate effects, which were far better than promises for a distant future. In a counter-insurgency fight; time is critical. During our rotation the phrase, “the Americans have the watches, but the Taliban has the time” was often heard.²⁹ Long term projects were of great value, but the COIN fight required speed in terms of bringing effects to the people to separate them from the enemy. ³⁰USAID expertise brought the immensely deep pockets of funds in support of the longer term fight. USAID money as larger “non lethal bullets” aimed by the PRT collaborative team enabled not only huge, long term road projects, but also smaller scale, rapidly turned governmental training programs, medical training programs, and education of governmental officials and lawyers on the Rule of Law. Occasionally (and humorously only at higher level meetings) there appeared to be friction between the DOD, the NGOs, DoS, and USAID on who “got” which projects. Over time, and mainly through the PRTs, all of these agencies and departments worked

for relatively combined effects enabling the Afghans to choose their Government vs. the alternate vision and the long term, sustainable projects that would enable Afghanistan to stand on its own.³¹ Our commander consistently said “anything is possible as long as you don’t care who gets the credit.”³² These powerful words came to fruition through the PRTs.

In terms of BCT support to the efforts of the PRTs a significant amount of energy was devoted to the assistance of development, contracting, screening, and funding of the myriad CERP funded projects within RC-E.

CERP money was not “free” in terms of a haphazard gifting of funds to our Afghan allies. Professional dedication, legal restrictions, and stewardship of our taxpayers’ funds ensured that each approved project involving U.S. monies was fully vetted. Each PRT and maneuver battalion commander could ask for and receive approval for their “project packet” up to a cost of \$200,000. Any project costing over that amount required vetting and approval by our divisional staff and commander. Each and every project was rapidly screened by our Brigade staff (engineer, civil-military affairs officer, legal advisor, deputy commander) prior to approval by the Brigade commander for inclusion into the Integrated Priority List (IPL), and sent to the 82d ABN division headquarters, reducing some of the previous staff burden on the much more engaged PRT. Diminished resources and competition among the elements of RC-E and throughout Afghanistan resulted in the creation of a weekly “CERP Board” conducted by the division staff over secure Video Teleconference where projects were challenged, defended, and approved by the divisional staff. I often considered this a painful process; but the funds were overwhelmingly approved, to the point that our Brigade enabled the

Division to receive the unspent funds for the fiscal year for Iraq. The additional funds empowered projects throughout the Afghanistan mission in its entirety. Our civil-military operations officer, MAJ Basil Catanzaro, was central to the success of our Brigade, and its PRTs funding, its “non lethal bullets.”³³

Both the Polish Battle Group (which enjoyed the “dual hatted” support along with the 1-503rd of PRT Sharana), and the Czech PRT were able to legally and effectively tap into the accurate and timely CERP funds due to their close relationship with the U.S. PRTs of RC-E. The Czech and Polish elements matured in their approach for PRT efforts over time. The long term project advice of expertise from our USAID, HTT, and PRT personnel identified projects that would help prime the economic engine for villages and provinces in Afghanistan.

Soil experts and agricultural advisors aided in the identification of the right types of fertilizer needed to re-prime some of the “wheat basket” of Afghanistan in Ghazni province. Consistent requests for U.S. Department of Agriculture and other such specialists helped develop the growth of Afghan Agricultural Development Teams that deployed towards the end of our rotation to work in cooperation with the Ghazni PRT and its associated maneuver battalion to help develop the local capacity to grow and process wheat. This process continues today. Expertise in water management was brought to the PRTs to aid in this critical area.

Afghanistan has plenty of water but very little effective water management after decades of war and neglect. The old but effective “Karez” system of underground water management requires both cleaning and rebuilding in order to harness the available water for irrigation. Great effort across the BCT was made to develop a comprehensive

plan that would enable small business to flourish with foodstuffs produced on a much larger scale, products brought to a market illuminated by low cost solar lighting, served by decent roadways that prevented damage to the produce, and the ability to export these products to other villages and cities and also to neighboring Pakistan. Such a vision, shared by both our Afghan allies, and the dedicated experts of the PRTs and staff helped in the goal of convincing the local population that the future lay with their own government. The PRTs in both the informational and economic elements of power supported bringing construction and improvement to the provinces, positive elements to compete with the Taliban threats of violence.

Over time, our projects were much less focused on our providing a particular building for example, than to ensuring that all projects actually improved the capacity of the Afghan government and Afghan people. Instead of contracting a Western or non-Afghan firm to construct a road using Afghans only as unskilled labor, projects were created that ensured that Afghans were trained to operate the required machinery and mix the materials to a safe and effective standard. Some Afghans were provided the required tools and vehicles to bring a capable business to life. In one example, an asphalt plant was built in a province of RC-East, with the training and equipment necessary to enable local Afghan contractors to build quality hard surface roads. Such capacity building projects were successful in preparing a better future for the Afghan people. Combat Outposts, District Centers and other critical building projects were often contracted to local Afghan private ventures with great success. Hiring military age males, paying them a decent wage by local standards, and training them in a non-military skill proved successful in the COIN effort.

Interaction within the PRTs was occasionally challenging, as the joint/interagency environment was often heated. The military commander may have been the top of his/her class at their military academy, a “type A” best performer throughout his career.

The Department of State representative might be a young, (or older) emissary with a solid grade-point average from a good school working under the mandate of the Ambassador, cool in the knowledge that the DOS is the lead agency on dealing with all aspects of a foreign government, with a solid GPA from a good school.

The USAID representative could either be a dedicated expert who had already served years in Afghanistan and had seen various degrees of evolutionary progress by well intentioned military “knuckle-draggers”, or could be a very young, first rotation contractor who had very little knowledge of anything at all other than having reviewed the Afghan National Development Strategy. These three experts in their field had to work together in very close proximity, in a dangerous environment, in Spartan conditions, and under periods of high stress. The PRT commander, the DoS representative, and USAID expert were often referred to as three equals, but at the end of the day, we held the PRT military commander responsible for everything the PRT did or failed to do, and each commander individually worked with his or her team for the greatest unity of effort.

The PRT is a people and personality- intensive business. The skill set and culture required to run a nuclear submarine, for example, are not necessarily, or naturally, the same skill set required to embrace all the talents (and needs/wants) of a joint/interagency/coalition team. A Special Forces team commander is trained to work interagency/coalition/joint; many of the “rest” of us are not. Again, a nuke submariner

with a degree in Physics, who is used to immediate “aye aye’s” from his all male crew may be initially taken aback by a 22 year old female partner saying “you, are not the boss of me.” Each of our PRTs worked through the natural evolution of storming/norming/forming throughout its manning, stateside training, deployment, and employment in theater. Things that I took for granted as an Army officer were not readily apparent to a joint service officer, like how to get HMMWVs fixed when they break down, or how to handle administrative/support/legal support, to Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, contractors, and our own coalition allies. For a person not accustomed to a long term deployment, having a gender, service, branch of government-integrated team living together for over a year proved challenging. Our Brigade commander provided a comprehensive welcome, initial Brigade train up, and commander’s intent/guidance in theater, followed with personal mentorship on the ground. I and the Brigade staff served as additional guidance/mentorship/framework/support for the PRTs at a slightly less-pressured level. Ultimately, it was an incredibly challenging mission to be a PRT commander in combat, and fortunately each of our men/women in the three rotations proved capable.

Interaction outside the PRTs was often challenging as well. PRTs within RC-E worked for their US military Brigade Combat Team commanders: our four US PRTs, seven US maneuver battalions, Polish Battle Group, and Czech PRT all reported to the 4th BCT commander. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) PRTs reported to ISAF headquarters and their own national command elements. Often various governmental and non-governmental agencies sought to go directly to the PRTs for questions, visits, guidance, tasking and the like. The average US PRT commander was

meeting several times a week at a minimum with his Afghan governor, was on the road visiting Afghan district/local leadership, was conducting quality assurance/quality assistance visits to multi-million dollar projects, was answering to our own Brigade commander, and was also fighting against insurgents determined to thwart his efforts and kill his personnel. He also had daily coordination and meetings with his partnered US maneuver battalion and nightly/daily coordination meetings with his own PRT team leadership.

The US brigade command acted as the “gatekeeper” in many ways for the PRT commander’s time. It is no exaggeration to say that many times, even daily, our PRT commanders would refer both national and international requests for their time to me for deflection; there would be no way for a PRT commander to be able to accomplish any of their “true” missions if they entertained all outside requests on their time. Congressional delegations, Ambassadorial visits (US, NATO, ISAF, foreign), various and sundry military visits, UNAMA, International Red Cross, international fellows, academicians, reporters, research analysts-many outside requests came in. During the time we served in Afghanistan, it was a constant education/battle to ensure that the US (and later Czech) PRTs would have a single reporting chain, and a fairly decently respected battle rhythm. I completely underestimated the amount of time and effort required to “help” protect the PRT commanders’ time, despite the thorough briefing I had received from the previous unit deputy commander. Our own Brigade and division demanded regular and clear reports from the “normal” situation reports to our twice weekly “PRT commanders report” over the radio, to full participation,(with their associated governor) in preparation for the divisional campaign objectives assessment

brief (COAB)³⁴. The addition of multiple lines of “concern” from ISAF, multinational, and international direct players would have been distracting at the minimum. Other distractors during the PRTs’ mission included the elements from the Afghan Engineering District (AED) and Combined Security and Transition Coalition-Team-Afghanistan (CSTC-A), whose efforts on behalf of the Afghan people at times were not coordinated with either the Division, Brigade Combat Team, PRTs, or the Afghans themselves. Occasional “aid fraticide” occurred as Afghan and other contractors were engaged to build schools, governmental buildings, portions of roads, or bridges without the knowledge of either the PRT or even of the provincial governmental leadership. A good deal of time and effort at all levels was expended to secure a commonly desired effect between CSTC-A (supporting infrastructure, development, and training of the ANA/ANP) and our own BCT in sector. The AED tended to support both CSTC-A construction with little coordination with the maneuver BCTs, as well as acting as a contracting organization in support of longer term, larger projects funded by international donors and most importantly USAID.

One would think that there would be a single “master plan” for Afghanistan, subject to additional refinement within each regional command. This was not necessarily the case in 2008-2009. Great headway was made by the Afghan and Coalition leadership at all levels during our rotation to coordinate the effort for a common good. PRTs consistently had to pay attention to the various pots of money that could be used for different types of projects. The Brigade and Divisional legal team assisted in this effort. Our Brigade ran a very comprehensive “CERP school” and primer for both the PRTs and maneuver battalions that would manage CERP projects. This

was exported to our sister Brigade as well as to the Divisional headquarters.³⁵ Unfortunately for our PRTs, on rare occasions the best projects were delayed until the appropriate pressure could be brought to bear. As an example, one PRT road project included a vehicle turn off, embedded vehicular weight scale, and government building in order to enable the Afghan government to actually weigh cross border trucks and cars. This project would support checking traffic and enable the application of a reasonable tariff that would provide legitimate revenue for the Afghan national and local government to self-maintain the roadway. The scale was not funded as the division staff decision was that the Afghans needed to “figure out their own system in their own time.”³⁶ I’m still confused at this decision, as I thought that the overall project was a well-thought out, forward-thinking proposal to further develop Afghan capacity for self-sustainment.

Recommendations for “Future” PRTs

Manning: choose PRT commanders with the same level of screening as those for command. COIN requires talented officers with “people skills”, leadership ability in a joint and multi-cultural environment. The U.S. Army has provided instructions to the promotion boards to strongly consider PRT/MTT leadership roles in their promotion decisions, and also counts PRT/MTT field grade positions as “key and developmental.” The Navy appears to pick its best rated officers for PRT positions, I recommend that all contributing services do the same. Each PRT should be manned with an experienced DOS representative, USAID representative, and a United States Department of Agriculture representative at a minimum. Each of the supporting agencies should offer incentives to attract the best of their personnel to man the PRT effort. Much of the

“nation building” mission requires significant military support, but the intellectual capital of the inter-agency is critical to the most effective pursuit of success in Afghanistan. I recommend the addition of an Army captain to each PRT to serve as the unit logistics officer. During our rotation the PRTs tended to have a junior lieutenant serve in this billet, resulting in issues with property accountability and less than optimum staff recommendations to the PRT commander.

Training: Continue to assemble and train the PRT together prior to deployment. This is truly a “team”, and as in team sports there are critical bonding events that bring the team together. The training at Fort Bragg in the required military and field craft skills are important for mission success, but the time spent as a unit in both the field and classroom enable the unit leadership to understand each of the members’ strengths and weaknesses. Include “off site” educational opportunities to the subject matter experts in Washington, D.C as well as at the U.S. Army War College, the Peace-Keeping and Stability Operations Institute, and the Indiana University program. Expand the professional reading for PRT commanders prior to deployment from the current shelf, to volumes recommended by both the subject matter experts at both the U.S. Army War College and National Defense University. Add additional expertise to the cultural training to the joint service personnel manning the PRTs, to include Special Forces personnel recently serving in theater as well as a more formalized interaction with current PRT commanders in the field.³⁷

Equipping: Recommend additional helicopter support for PRTs in Afghanistan. The Czechs had planned to bring their own helicopter capacity for the use of their PRT in country (both “lift” and “attack” aircraft.) The PRTs and maneuver battalions were

constantly in competition for helicopter support, and CSTC-A also relied on the same aircraft for their mission throughout the country. The use of contracted helicopter support for logistic missions helped, but we had a constant demand for aircraft to support myriad missions throughout RC-E. The recent decision to send an additional U.S. Aviation brigade to Afghanistan may relieve some pressure on the various units in the field but the demand in country will be required. The Afghan Air Force capability continues to improve and should reduce the Afghan government reliance on U.S. support for both transportation of governmental/military personnel as well as attack aircraft in support of security operations.

This paper focuses on the effects of the three PRT rotations during our OEF VIII deployment. During the time we served in RC-E, teams from ISAF, West Point, the Senate Research Service, our own Ft. Bragg-based training brigade for PRTs, and various authors all gathered “best practices” and “lessons learned” in addition to the regular international PRT conferences in Kabul. The ISAF (NATO) PRTs tapped into lessons learned that were gathered in Portugal, that were shared at PRT training conducted in Germany (US/ISAF controlled PRTs attended the same). U.S. PRTs in RC-E tended to gain their information by the training conducted at Fort Bragg and in the pre-deployment exercises, and post-deployment training in Bagram, Afghanistan. I recommend continued effort on the “PRT handbook” as it continues to evolve.³⁸ This handbook needs to be consistently updated with both “best practices” as the situation in Afghanistan develops; to include “real world” vignettes to bring the situation on the ground to life for the future PRT members. The “Company commander’s website” that has proven so valuable could be used to model a “PRT commanders” shared website

for the benefit of PRTs in both Afghanistan and Iraq. A recommended reading and training list should not only be provided to PRT members in training, but also truly mandated as part of the training curriculum. Part of the success enjoyed by the 4th BCT, 82d Airborne Division, was a comprehensive training evolution for senior officers and non-commissioned officers including a leadership development program in Washington, DC prior to deployment. Visits to the Joint IED-Defeat Organization, CIA, DIA, State Department, USAID, and to the counter-insurgency experts in the National Defense University helped bond our leadership together, as well as to link us with the expertise resident in the continental United States. The PRT leadership should enjoy the same training evolution, with more “in depth” education on the language and culture of Afghanistan such as the Indiana University program, as well as a more in depth education on agricultural processes and engineering projects. The training evolution conducted for PRTs at Fort Bragg improved immensely between the three cycles we observed for Operation Enduring Freedom VIII---due in part to the candid input by the previous cycles. During our “main” PRT rotation; the PRT elements had been sequestered in a tent city forward operating base in the middle of a drop zone in the field, with little climate control, almost no access to the unclassified internet, and zero access to the classified e-mail network. This short-changed the incoming unit’s abilities to coordinate directly with the unit’s they would relieve. Subsequent rotations improved upon this critical lack of infrastructure. The constant refrain was “our living conditions and connectivity were immensely better in theater than at Bragg.”

The current Administration’s announcement that additional 17,000 US personnel would be deployed to Afghanistan is welcome news to me as a former RC-E Soldier. I

personally witnessed the incredible effects that were obtained by simply doubling the BCTs in RC E from one to two. Adding an additional BCT to the provinces of Logar and Wardak will extend the reach of the Afghan government immensely; these two provinces were an “economy of force within an economy of force” with only a single brigade special troops battalion sharing its attention throughout this area with a single U.S. PRT covering Paktya province. Additional NATO security force trainers are needed in Afghanistan to improve on the Afghan Security Force capacity. Mentorship, but even more importantly in the short term, partnership between ANP and coalition military are required. The fight in RC-S has been primarily kinetic thus far. Although viscerally satisfying to see enemy combatants permanently removed from the battlefield we need to smash the enemy not just for the sake of smashing them, but to create the “white space” needed for simultaneous development by the PRTs and by international agencies. Our “surge” needs to reinforce the delicate successes in RC-East, and to actually succeed in the very dangerous holding actions in the RC-S.

In this time of economic downturns and doubt, we need to continue the valuable CERP program. The dollar spent in Afghanistan goes a long way in such a devastated country. U.S. military and civilian oversight resident in the BCTs and the PRTs enable the American taxpayers’ investment to actually create the desired COIN effects. USAID needs to have the appropriate funding not only for its projects, but also for the re-structure and manning of a force devastated by years of official neglect in the post-Vietnam era.³⁹The Afghan Engineering District (AED) needs to continue to be manned and funded to support the long term development goals for a stable and prosperous Afghanistan.

I believe the Afghans want peace. I believe that they want their family structure to remain intact. They support education of their children within their own value system. They want to be able to sell and buy their products safely and locally. They want their own government to be able to provide for them, and they want to see their own elected officials. If foreigners can help with the mentorship, structure, and support of their security infrastructure, if we can help Afghan companies stand up, to build their own roads, to open their own businesses—the Taliban and Al-Qaeda will likely be beaten. The Afghans know that they beat the Soviets. They remember that we as the US helped them during the time of the Soviet occupation. Standing with them now, and not “re-defining” success or abandoning them again is critical to the establishment of a secure, functional, democratic Afghanistan. We need a functional Afghanistan; the “failed state” supported the original Al-Qaeda threat from 9-11 and their associated Taliban hosts. As early as 2001, Dr. Larry Goodson wrote of the reasons why Afghanistan’s failure could pose a threat to the United States.⁴⁰ We need a stable Afghanistan to the east of fundamentalist Iran. We need a stable Afghanistan to the west of embattled Pakistan. We need a stable and functional Afghanistan that can shift its economic foundation from international aid and opium production to one that is able to provide its own wheat, flour, meat, pomegranates, and natural resources to its own population and others both regional and worldwide.⁴¹

Cultural training for PRT commanders and staffs continues to improve. As stated earlier, a multi-service, mixed civilian-governmental, mixed gender organization needs to be prepared not only for a foreign culture in Afghanistan, but also for the cultural change of working in what rapidly becomes a combat environment. Often the language

was not delicate, whether in person or over the radio. Standards of personal and unit discipline, property accountability, field sanitation, unit morale, and combat awareness were critical; challenging in any good unit, and certainly so in a rainbow coalition of a combined/joint/interagency unit. Time pressure for actions was significant. The demand for results was consistent in our BCT, and the price for failure was high. Each of our PRTs suffered casualties in the field as a reminder of the danger present in the effort to transform Afghanistan. One PRT suffered the injury of personnel during the last week in country a suicide bombing against the Provincial Governor at the opening of a medical clinic—an incredible experience for a small, joint, and combined team. As a “joint vignette,” I listened to two PRT commanders (one a Naval aviator, one an Air force officer) discussing the shifting of an 81mm mortar in support of two of their projects. One turned to me and laughed, saying “hey man, I never, ever thought that I’d be talking about mortar support to my ground maneuver...I’m a Naval Aviator man!”

The topic of gender in Afghan culture is often a heated one. U.S. and Afghan culture differ on the roles of women both within and outside the home. From my view, assigning a female officer to serve as a PRT commander is not a wise move. Iraqi and some other Arab cultures are in my opinion, much more “western” than traditional Afghan tribal culture. The female PRT commander is challenged immediately because as a female, there are traditional and deeply felt cultural roles and responsibilities between males and females, despite their being from different countries. Our governors, male Afghans from different tribal affiliations, even some with Western education, could not easily bring a female into a “shura” or meeting, even though she was a serving officer. It is unfortunate, but in this particular country I do not believe that it is wise for

either the mission or for the serving officer to be placed in the position of PRT commander, at least in the provinces within Regional Command-East. During our BCT time in theater, we had two talented female officers serve as PRT commanders, but neither could achieve the desired effects primarily due to the cultural attitudes of the Afghan people. Retired Department of State Officer Michael Metrinko crafted a guidebook for U.S. advisors serving in countries with Muslim societies where he offered his expertise gained over decades serving abroad, stating, “The female advisor may be able to overcome these cultural inhibitions against her success by forces of personality and professional competence, but it will be a difficult uphill battle, consuming inordinate time and energy and possibly detracting from the advisory mission.”⁴²

In closing, Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Regional Command-East provided a superb view of the synergy that can be created from combining all aspects of national power: diplomatic, informational, military, and economic. The “interagency” operated in a very effective manner in this small, tactical setting of the PRT. The team of talented, joint, combined, interagency personnel that actually executed positive things and created positive effects for the COIN effort in eastern Afghanistan. Provincial Reconstruction Teams work, and their number and strength should be increased.

Endnotes

¹ “In March 2008, ISAF was responsible for 26 PRTs, led by 14 different NATO member or Partner countries with a total of 30 countries represented... In places where the security environment does not permit other actors to operate effectively, the PRTs are helping get reconstruction and development projects off the ground and supporting projects to meet short term needs.” NATO, “NATO Afghanistan Briefing: Helping secure Afghanistan’s future, www.nato.int/issues/afghanistan (accessed February, 2009)

² Dr. Larry Goodson provides insight to the why “nation building” is important in Afghanistan “First, an ounce of nation-building prevention will be worth a pound of military-operation cure.

The ensemble of approaches summarized under the term “nation-building,” for all their slowness and difficulty, must be vital parts of any strategy to blunt radical Islamism’s appeal. Second, while nation-building will not always require the comprehensive reconstruction of the polity, economy, and physical infrastructure of a bludgeoned land, it does require all these things in Afghanistan, and so a sustained international effort under U.S. leadership is indispensable.” Larry Goodson, “Afghanistan’s Road to Reconstruction” *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 1 (January 2003):97-98.

³ The armored SUVs addressed not only the immediately perceived post-assassination threat, but later the actual attempted assassination of the Governor of Khowst on at least five occasions during our deployment. Car-bombs were the weapon of choice, on one occasion the armored SUV was severely damaged by an IED but the governor had chosen to personally ride in another vehicle as part of his own program for force protection. These armored SUVs were replaced as they were damaged, and additional vehicles were purchased for governor’s whose provinces were added to the RC-E area of responsibility. Our PRTs did have to ensure that the governors understood that the vehicles were for the position of governor, not a gift to the individual to keep out of office.

⁴ This reference was not our BCTs alone. GEN Petraeus also knew of the value of CERP dollars in his efforts in Iraq. “Petraeus’s favorite aphorism “Money is ammunition,” which he had coined in Mosul, remained untouched.” Linda Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the search for a way out of Iraq* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008), 79

⁵ “The first time you share tea with a Balti, you are a stranger. The second time you take tea, you are an honored guest. The third time you share a cup of tea, you become family, and for our family, we are prepared to do anything, even die. Dr. Greg, you must make time to share three cups of tea. We may be uneducated. But we are not stupid. We have lived and survived here for a long time.” Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin, *Three Cups of Tea* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 150.

⁶ During our pre-deployment training there was opportunity for discussion on national caveats and other limiting factors. Casualties were a concern for all participating countries to include the U.S. The more “permissive” areas appeared to attract more non-governmental organization support, leaving the higher security threat areas to U.S. forces and agencies. The various incidents over the post-Vietnam years appeared to show that the U.S. would rapidly leave if its elements suffered casualties; I say this in broad reference to the casualties of Desert One in the Iranian desert, the bombing of the Marine barracks in Lebanon, and the losses incurred during the U.S. participation in the intervention in Somalia. Our tenure in Afghanistan included losses to both our military elements of the maneuver battalions, as well as to our civilian and joint team. Despite the losses neither the maneuver elements, nor the combined/interagency PRT team diminished its work across RC-E.

⁷ “Handcon” was a relationship that I heard GEN Zinni use in a training film at the Joint Warfighting Center (JWFC) in Suffolk, Virginia. He was referring to a command and control arrangement based on a “handshake” agreement, vs. a more traditional method such as OPCON/TACON or supporting/supported.

⁸ The Czech PRT was much more robust in terms of the ability to provide its own force protection than an American one; however its ability to rapidly apply funds to projects was much less developed than either the average US PRT, or in this case, LTC Steve Bakers Brigade

Special Troops Battalion (BSTB) who had been both fighting and building in this region for the previous year, utilizing the commanders CERP funds as a non-lethal weapon.

⁹ “Many experts believed that unity of command was vital to success in counterinsurgencies. One model was the CORDS (Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support) program in Vietnam, which combined military and civilians in the same chain of command...The new provincial reconstruction teams in Baghdad were also embedded at each brigade headquarters, where they reported to the brigade commander.” Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends, General David Petraeus and the search for a way out of Iraq*, 116.

¹⁰ “The indirect approach addresses the underlying causes of terrorism and the environments in which terrorism activities occur. The indirect approach requires more time than the direct approach to achieve effects, but ultimately will be the decisive effort.” Admiral Eric T. Olson, Statement of Admiral Eric T. Olson, U.S. Navy Commander United States Special Operations Command Before the Senate Armed Services Committee on the Posture of Special Operations Forces, March 4, 2008

¹¹ Both CDR Wade and CDR Adams had served directly in the office of the CNO. Both of these talented officers said that they were told directly by the CNO that they were taking command of PRTs due to their leadership abilities, and would be assigned command of warships upon completion of the mission. Both of these superb officers are serving today.

¹² Each military service trains its officers in leadership, whether on land, sea, or air. Military services require many junior officers but less numbers at the higher ranks. A competitive selection process for promotion and for command is present in each service. Some may argue, but the military, in my personal and professional opinion is one of the few meritocracies in America. Only a very small number of Naval officers meet the selection criteria to be given command of a surface or submarine vessel; only a handful of highly trained Naval aviators are afforded the opportunity to fly in the precision team of the Blue Angels. Talent can be described in many ways—specifically in regards to the PRTs however, the extremely technical talents required to command a nuclear submarine may not immediately result in a leader who can bring together a combined/inter-agency team in combat.

¹³ Early in our rotation there was discussion “tongue in cheek” of constructing a series of “defensible veterinary clinics” throughout our A/O. We eventually gained the skill set to fund and contract building projects to ensure both the physical safety of the structure from the elements, but also to the fairly unique cultural and security requirements of the Afghan countryside. You don’t want to build a school for women that has no wall to protect the students and teachers from unwanted eyes.

¹⁴ Zinni, Joint Warfighting Center (JWFC) film, see citation 4.

¹⁵ During our rotation we discovered that the popular statement that corruption was “just part of Afghan culture” and that the Afghan’s didn’t care about corruption were both incorrect. Discussions directly with provincial governors, district governors, Afghan military commanders, and local villagers all indicated that any “corruption” either perceived or proven, were unacceptable to Afghans. Human Terrain Teams broadened the scope of our Western view of Afghan “culture” in this regard. Theft, whether taking a cell phone from a villager, or diverting aid money and contracts, was a constant source of discussion and anger among locals in RC-E. Both afghan and western coalition elements constantly scrutinized governmental officials for wrong-doing both real and perceived. I do agree however, that there are definite differences in

the “culture” of what behavior can be tolerated or accepted in political leaders between Afghanistan and the U.S. Our own political leaders in U.S. history, from Huey Long, to Marion Berry show that sometimes personal behavior and character mean less to some constituents than the ability to deliver the desired product.

¹⁶ This cross border meeting had been scheduled due to the increase in small conflicts between tribal elements on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistan border. The U.S. contingent included our BCT DoS representative, a superbly qualified and professional lifelong Foreign Service officer, as well as the Afghan governor, Brigade Special Troops Battalion (BSTB) commander, BSTB Operations officer, and a handful of U.S. personnel. Immediately following the meeting and concluding photo opportunities, personnel dressed in Pakistani Frontier Corps uniform engaged our team in a near ambush, killing one U.S. officer. U.S. forces returned fire, killing the initial assailant and likely several others. The U.S. and Afghan personnel made it to the extraction pickup-zone under pressure and were brought back to FOB Salerno. This was a particularly hard day for our combined and inter-agency team; the fallen Soldier was immensely popular in our unit and a superbly talented professional.

¹⁷ “The overall focus of a human terrain team is to use socio-cultural research and knowledge of the population to advise and make recommendations to the brigade during planning and operations that positively affect both the population and the military unit, preventing violence before it starts, or decreasing it after inception.” Captain Nathan Finney, “Unity of Effort: A Culture of Cooperation and the Cooperation of Cultural Systems,” *ARMOR* (January-February 2009):46.

¹⁸ Reference Human Terrain Teams (HTTs) “Mercenary Anthropologists”, one critic called them. “The Army’s new secret weapon.” Adam Geller, Associated Press, “Odyssey Took Man from Campus to Combat”, *Arizona Republic (Phoenix)*, March 8, 2009.

¹⁹ MG Khalique, commander 203rd ANA Corps, during OPERATION MAIWAND

²⁰ COL Marty Schweitzer emphasized that the combined efforts of the Afghan security elements, coalition military efforts, and the improvement in the range of Afghan governmental capacity to provide for its citizens were the key—the Afghan government (with its allies) could “build” things for the Afghan citizens, the only thing that the Taliban/AI Queda could do was destroy things. Our goal was to convince the populace that their own government could provide positive things for them while the opposite vision of the Taliban only brought terror. “Eventual victory results in large measure from convincing a solid majority of members of the population that their lives will be better under the government than under an insurgent regime.”Conrad C. Crane, “Minting COIN, Principles and Imperatives for Combating Insurgency,” *Air & Space Power Journal*, December 01 2007, <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/apj07/win07/crane.html> (accessed January 21, 2009).

²¹ Our 3rd SFG A-team commander, Darrin Blatt wrote the following in regards to our combined effort: “The Cav unit was the battle space “owner,” so it was extremely important to meet with them and share operational philosophies....Understanding the need for unity of effort is the first step to success in the counterinsurgency, or COIN environment” “In eastern Paktya, the population’s ethical decisions are not governed by a rigid moral compass based on moral imperatives. Ethics are based on self-interest and on self-preservation. Using one’s position to better one’s family, clan, village, or tribe is expected” MAJ Darin J. Blatt et al., “Tribal Engagement in Afghanistan” *Special Warfare* 22, no. 1 (January-February 2009) 20.

²² The burden of “proof” was interesting in regards to the removal of “negative actors” during such raids. The provincial governors had to be able to satisfy their constituents that actions taken had occurred for a valid reason, and that either reparations would be paid, damages to property addressed, and that per custom either visits to personnel in custody were arranged, or the person released on the guarantee of the local/tribal leader. The burden of legal proof will continue to be an issue as Afghan rule of law improves. What defines a criminal, enemy, or even a “negative influencer” is a challenge to both the Afghan government and Western military forces. One Afghan security force leader was removed by coalition and Afghan forces after an extensive and detailed (98 page) investigative briefing was prepared. Pictures of hundreds of rifles, machine-guns, rocket-propelled grenade launchers seized from his personal quarters were attached, as well as evidence of significant wrong-doing in every conceivable manner. Despite the compelling evidence, this detention proved challenging as tribal politics included sending a large element of protestors to Kabul. The maturing of Afghan governmental effectiveness, as well as that of its security forces should eventually remove some of this burden from coalition forces.

²³ It sounds incredible, but such MTTs had previously operated freely throughout the battle space without the knowledge of either PRT or BCT commanders or staff. There was a parallel structure in place, with CSTC-A officially training and mentoring the ANA, but without any coordination or command and control linkages with the 82d or 101st Divisional staff in Bagram; and certainly without any C2 arrangement with the BCT commanders/battle space owners. At its best; without any arrangement with the BCT would result in a lack of timely U.S. ability to aid an MTT in contact with fires, quick reaction force, or MEDEVAC. At its worst, such teams could suffer fratricide. The decision to have MTTs “OPCON” to the BCT battle space owner during operations was the best command and control decision for the BCT, the MTTs and for the PRTs.

²⁴ “Therefore, in 2003, CFC-A was established as the joint operational level headquarters for Afghanistan. A subordinate unified command, CFC-A was also responsible for building the Afghan National Army...pushing reconstruction efforts through their newly established Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT), and managing the joint special operations fight. Colonel Ian Hope, *Unity of Command in Afghanistan: A Forsaken Principle of War* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, November, 2008), 9.

²⁵ In an example, several units suffered losses of both Army and police who were not being paid in a timely fashion and who were challenged to actually get his pay home in a country without the normal banking infrastructure. The Taliban and others took advantage of this, often recruiting low level fighters with promises of easy pay, close to home: “If you were a lad in the hills, and you were offered \$12 to stay local, or you could take \$4 and fight miles away from home, which would you do?” “The Taliban offer “piece-rates of \$10 to \$20 a day for joining a given attack on Western forces, \$15 to launch a single mortar round into nearby coalition military bases, and \$1,000 for the head of a government worker or a foreigner.” Samuel Chan, “Sentinels of Afghan Democracy: The Afghan National Army,” *Military Review* (January-February 2009): 32.

²⁶ “The people fear the police more than they do the Taliban, and until we can get that fixed, it’s going to be a long road.” *Ibid.*, 37.

²⁷ MAJ Broadbent served in an extremely effective, wide ranging manner throughout our service in Afghanistan; from contracts, to investigations, criminal behavior, to administrative law. In the improvement to the capacity of “Rule of Law”; MAJ Broadbent was overwhelmingly

successful at actually improving the effectiveness and capability for IROA law in RC-E. MAJ Broadbent was recently a contributor to the Role of Law Handbook; A Practitioner's Guide for Judge Advocates. For this topic, and specifically for the genesis of BCT RoL training in RC-E, I highly recommend reviewing his chapter of the text. The Judge Advocate General's Legal Center & School, *Rule of Law Handbook, A Practitioner's Guide for Judge Advocates*, (Charlottesville, VA:2008): 257-267

²⁸ "All progress in Afghanistan...hinges on establishing a viable Afghan government" "Most Afghans do not view the insurgents as a viable alternative to the current government but are reluctant to stand up to them on behalf of a government that can neither protect them nor deliver basic services." "Kabul should take the initiative in fighting insurgents, building critical infrastructure, and reforming corrupt national institutions while provincial and district governments and community organizations should take the lead in driving local economies, delivering basic services, and conducting dispute resolution. Such synergy is critical to ingratiating the Afghan government to its citizens, thereby re-establishing its legitimacy." "...actors should undertake efforts to invest in agriculture and build the infrastructure that will allow Afghan farmers to safely and securely transport their goods to market. Such action will create jobs, reduce Afghans' dependence on the drug trade, foster trade, and spur sustainable economic growth." "Long-term stability in Afghanistan-and the permanent eradication of terrorist bases on its soil-is attainable only if Afghan and international actors can agree on a vision of an Afghanistan defined by good governance, economic growth and self-perpetuating security-and work together towards its attainment. Ali Ahmad Jalali, "How To Win In Afghanistan," *Washington Times*, March 1, 2009.

²⁹ Heard from various Afghan military and political figures during OEF-VIII, referring to the time that the West, and that the enemy had to devote to the struggle in Afghanistan. Potential rivals, and friends, understand that the U.S. energy to devote to other Nations can be fleeting, despite our having been in this region for eight years. This particular quote was attributed to Mullah Omar according to Dr. Larry P. Goodson at the United States Army War College.

³⁰ Quote from LTG Dave Barno: "One of the most positive aspects of the PRTs is that they allow the Afghan government to make its presence felt in the rural areas...focused on helping the people. "A PRT is really a catalyst. It forms a focal point in a particular area, with the goal of building not only relationships, but also serving as an accelerator in the rebuilding of the nation and extending the reach of the Afghan central government.

From: COL Thomas X. Hames, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century* (Minneapolis, MN: Zenith Press, 2006), 70.

³¹ The 4th BCT, 82d Airborne Division utilized the COIN strategy developed by COL Nicholson (Commander 3/10th BCT, 10th Mountain Division) and further developed it during the course of our rotation. COL Marty Schweitzer (commander, 4/82) capitalized on the great efforts of 3/10, and built on it due to our ability to put twice as many paratroopers on the ground in our portion of RC-East. This COIN effort included modifying our briefing for various congressional delegations and other distinguished visitors to enable them to clearly understand what we were doing in the COIN fight, and what was needed for us to be successful. In each "separating the enemy from the population"---was either done kinetically or non-kinetically. Our effort was to give enough "white space" to enable the Afghan government to provide the desired services to their people; this would give the average citizen the ability to "vote" on whether he would support the Islamic Government of Afghanistan, or choose the Taliban. Overwhelmingly in areas

that we focused on, the Afghans chose to “build” with the IROA, instead of what was offered by the Taliban.

³² Spoken by COL Marty Schweitzer, Commander 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82d Airborne Division

³³ MAJ Basil Catanzaro joined our BCT after we arrived in country. A professional Civil Affairs officer, Catanzaro had just graduated from Naval Post Graduate School. Catanzaro had previously served as a CA officer in support of ARSOF in Afghanistan. Calm under pressure and absolutely unmatched in obtaining results for our BCT/PRT elements; led his very small team in this central piece of our COIN effort. The unsung heroes of this process were the very small Civil Military Operations element within the 4th BCT headquarters; two dedicated officers and two NCOs who truly carried the water for the critical non-lethal CERP bullets

³⁴ The COAB was briefing conducted in Bagram that attempted to show the metrics on how well we (the coalition) were doing in support of the Afghan government. Measures of performance and measures of effectiveness evolved throughout the duration of our deployment, and these measures were passed on to the units of the 101st Airborne Division who relieved us. Previous rotations may have measured the number of schools built in an attempt to portray improvements in education, however we found that a building without a funded, trained teacher approved by the Minister of Education provided little to Afghan capacity building. Our internal COABs were prepared with information provided by both the maneuver battalions and our PRTs, with the commanders personally briefing the Brigade commander. This briefing matured over time, resulting in the PRT and maneuver commanders briefing along with their partnered Afghan provincial governors. The Afghan 203rd Corps Commander, MG Khalique also participated along the security line of operation.

³⁵ Again, this product was modified and improved under the talents of MAJ Catanzaro and SSG Chrystal Mixon of the BCT civil military operations cell.

³⁶ Our divisional staff made what I consider to be a hasty decision on the road-way/weigh scale project. We had envisioned an Afghan road system that enabled the Afghan government to weigh the heavy vehicles coming across the border, and apply a regulated tariff on the traffic. This was to be a replacement for the random “taxes” levied by individual armed government/quasi governmental checkpoints throughout the country. The divisional staff opined that the Afghans needed to figure out their own system. I did not consider this a good method of assisting Afghan capacity building. Dr. Goodson provides the following: “Well-meaning or cynical decisions to “leave it to the locals” merely allow the preexisting problems to fester.” Goodson, “Afghanistan’s Road to Reconstruction”, 98.

³⁷ I am confident that the training evolution for each PRT has improved on the last. Our second cycle of PRT commanders had been isolated at the Fort Bragg “Forward Operating Base” without access to either unclassified or classified electronic mail. Secure Video-teleconference capability from the Fort Bragg training site, to current PRT and BCT commanders in theater would greatly improve on the ability to share the best information with the incoming team.

³⁸ We had an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) produced “PRT Handbook” while in Afghanistan. It was generally directed at “non U.S.” PRTs in terms of its day to day utility but still provided a valuable lens to our commanders on how ISAF expected PRTs to operate. The Peace-keeping and stability operations institute at the United States Army War

College provided me with a copy of the current PRT “playbook”, although IRAQ grounded, it tracks with the Afghan experience. This quote provides insight into the value of PRTs in the COIN fight: “The PRT does not act as an alternative to a host nation’s government but rather seeks to improve the governing capacity of the host nation. PRTs perform a vital role in occupying the vacuum caused by a weak government presence and hence deter agents of instability.” U.S. Department of the Army, *PRT Playbook Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures, No.07-34*, (Washington, D.C.:U.S. Department of the Army, Center for Army Lessons Learned, September 2007).³

³⁹ USAID documents illustrate that it will operate together with the DOD; to this end, they will require the funding and level of manning to make this happen. I saw the USAID expertise as valuable, but there were not enough of these dedicated professionals to have the optimal impact. USAID Civil Military Cooperation Policy states: “Department of Defense Directive 3000.05 (November 2005) indicates that stability operations are a core U.S. military mission that the DOD shall be prepared to conduct and support.” “The Directive acknowledges that many of the tasks and responsibilities associated with reconstruction and stabilization operations are not ones for which the military is necessarily best suited. However in the absence of civilian capacity to carry out these tasks, the capabilities will be developed within the military.” “In unstable areas in which USAID frequently works, development and security are intertwined and interdependent. The absence of a stable and secure environment constrains the provision of development assistance, and without development assistance, security will remain unsustainable.” “USAID is committed to a comprehensive, coherent whole of government approach and will partner with other USG entities to strengthen efforts to prepare, plan for, and conduct conflict mitigation, management, and stabilization assistance. United States Agency for International Development, *Civilian-Military Cooperation Policy*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Agency for International Development, July 2008) PD-ACL-777, http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_partnerships/ma/documents/Civ-MilPolicyJuly282008.pdf (accessed February, 2009).

⁴⁰ “Outside of Afghanistan and the surrounding region, who cares whether Afghanistan falls apart? Why, from the point of view of the major powers, is the political failure of a marginal developing state a threat to regional security or world order? Should this phenomenon, even if the threat is fully realized, alter the existing national security doctrines or policies of great powers such as the United States? The answer to the last question is yes. Third World state failure is a threat to security—perhaps the most important security issue facing the world early in the twenty-first century. This is because the Hobbesian man is reemerging, and he is fighting with others over a range of issues and on a variety of issues and on a variety of battlefields that are untraditional...when terrorists strike anywhere, everywhere, against anyone, confident that a major force of integration(the international media, such as CNN) will cover it? Larry P. Goodson, *Afghanistan's Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics, and the Rise of the Taliban* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 185.

⁴¹ The Human Terrain Teams and other experts working in Regional Command East helped map the economic activity within the provinces. One of the less advertised facts that the teams discovered (or re-discovered) was that although our provinces grew wheat, this wheat was exported to Pakistan for milling, with the flour re-exported to Afghanistan for purchase in the local markets. Afghan capacity for the full range of production requires improvement. During our rotation the funding of rock crushing machines and an Asphalt factory enabled Afghan firms to participate more fully in the road building business. Similarly, agricultural development projects,

combined with road improvements, marketplace improvements, and solar lighting enabled Afghan farmers to more effectively participate in the local and regional economic process.

⁴² “In traditional Muslim societies, a senior male foreign government official might find it unacceptable to be advised by a foreign female advisor. He might tolerate it on the surface, but would be unlikely in the initial state to pay serious attention to her advice and might not be comfortable in her presence. The female advisor would find it difficult to accompany the official to many events, and being alone with him would be improper culturally. No matter how moral, professional, and correct she might be, an American female officer assigned such duties would have to overcome certain negative assumptions in foreign eyes. The female advisor may be able to overcome these cultural inhibitions against her success by force of personality and professional competence, but it will be a difficult uphill battle, consuming inordinate time and energy and possibly detracting from the advisory mission.” Michael J. Metrinko, *The American Military Advisor: Dealing with Senior Foreign Officials in the Islamic World* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: United States Army War College, Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute, August, 2008), 20.

